

MISS FERN: Yes, perhaps we have.

CHRISTINE: This is a terrible tragedy for Mrs. Daigle, as you say. She has lost her only child. But if there were any shadow over Rhoda—from what has happened—I shall have to live under it—and my husband, too. As for Rhoda—she would not be happy in your school next year. *Turns upstage toward window*

MISS FERN: No, she would not. *Christine stops and turns toward Miss Fern.* And since she would not, it would be as well to make up our minds now that she will not be there.

CHRISTINE, *crosses downstage center:* Then there is a shadow over her—and you have already decided not to invite her back!

MISS FERN: Yes. *Rises and faces Christine:* We have made that decision.

CHRISTINE: But you can't tell me why?

MISS FERN, *crosses to Christine:* I think her behavior in the matter of the medal would be sufficient explanation. She has no sense of fair play. She's a poor loser. She doesn't play the game.

CHRISTINE: But you're not saying that Rhoda had anything to do with the Daigle boy's death.

MISS FERN: Of course not! Such a possibility never entered our minds! *At this moment the doorbell chimes.*

CHRISTINE: I'd better answer.

MISS FERN: Of course, my dear.

## NO EXIT

by Jean-Paul Sartre,  
translated by Stuart Gilbert

Sartre's one-act play takes place in Hell. Three people—two women and one man—are locked together in one bricked-up room, hideously decorated in Second Empire style, where the electric lights can never be turned off. Each character has a story that reveals the circumstances of his or her death on earth, and all three deny that they deserve to be punished for their deeds. Sartre's Hell is not the fire and brimstone of the Bible but the psychological cruelty that people can inflict on each other.

Toward the beginning of the play Inez, a lesbian, tries to befriend Estelle, a lovely but exceedingly vain young woman who has eyes only for Garcin, the male of the group. Estelle is very concerned with her appearance and falls into despair when she discovers there are no mirrors in Hell. Inez seizes this opportunity to coerce Estelle into a relationship. Garcin, the man, is present throughout this excerpt, but he does not speak.

*Estelle has been plying her powder puff and lipstick. She looks round for a mirror, fumbles in her bag, then turns towards Garcin.*

ESTELLE: Excuse me, have you a glass? *Garcin does not answer.* Any sort of glass, a pocket mirror will do. *Garcin remains silent.* Even if you won't speak to me, you might lend me a glass.

*His head still buried in his hands, Garcin ignores her.*

INEZ, *eagerly:* Don't worry. I've a glass in my bag. *She opens her bag. Angrily:* It's gone! They must have taken it from me at the entrance.

ESTELLE: How tiresome!

*A short silence. Estelle shuts her eyes and sways, as if about to faint. Inez runs forward and holds her up.*

INEZ: What's the matter?

ESTELLE, *opens her eyes and smiles:* I feel so queer. *She pats herself.* Don't you ever get taken that way? When I can't see myself I begin to wonder if I really and truly exist. I pat myself just to make sure, but it doesn't help much.

INEZ: You're lucky. I'm always conscious of myself—in my mind. Painfully conscious.

ESTELLE: Ah yes, in your mind. But everything that goes on in one's head is so vague, isn't it? It makes one want to sleep. *She is silent for a while.* I've six big mirrors in my bedroom. There they are. I can see them. But they don't see me. They're reflecting the carpet, the settee, the window—but how empty it is, a glass in which I'm absent! When I talked to people I always made sure there was one nearby in which I could see myself. I watched myself talking. And somehow it kept me alert, seeing

myself as the others saw me. . . . Oh dear! My lipstick! I'm sure I've put it on all crooked. No, I can't do without a looking glass for ever and ever, I simply can't.

INEZ: Suppose I try to be your glass? Come and pay me a visit, dear. Here's a place for you on my sofa.

ESTELLE: But— (*points to Garcin*)

INEZ: Oh, he doesn't count.

ESTELLE: But we're going to—to hurt each other. You said it yourself.

INEZ: Do I look as if I wanted to hurt you?

ESTELLE: One never can tell.

INEZ: Much more likely *you'll* hurt *me*. Still, what does it matter? If I've got to suffer, it may as well be at your hands, your pretty hands. Sit down. Come closer. Closer. Look into my eyes. What do you see?

ESTELLE: Oh, I'm there! But so tiny I can't see myself properly.

INEZ: But *I* can. Every inch of you. Now ask me questions. I'll be as candid as any looking glass.

*Estelle seems rather embarrassed and turns to Garcin, as if appealing to him for help.*

ESTELLE: Please, Mr. Garcin. Sure our chatter isn't boring you?

*Garcin makes no reply.*

INEZ: Don't worry about him. As I said, he doesn't count. We're by ourselves. . . . Ask away.

ESTELLE: Are my lips all right?

INEZ: Show! No, they're a bit smudgy.

ESTELLE: I thought as much. Luckily (*throws a quick glance at Garcin*) no one's seen me. I'll try again.

INEZ: That's better. No. Follow the line of your lips. Wait! I'll guide your hand. There. That's quite good.

ESTELLE: As good as when I came in?

INEZ: Far better. Crueler. Your mouth looks quite diabolical that way.

ESTELLE: Good gracious! And you say you like it! How maddening, not being able to see for myself! You're quite sure, Miss Serrano, that it's all right now?

INEZ: Won't you call me Inez?

ESTELLE: Are you sure it looks all right?

INEZ: You're lovely, Estelle.

ESTELLE: But how can I rely upon your taste? Is it the same as *my* taste? Oh, how sickening it all is, enough to drive one crazy!

INEZ: I *have* your taste, my dear, because I like you so much. Look at me. No, straight. Now smile. I'm not so ugly, either. Am I not nicer than your glass?

ESTELLE: Oh, I don't know. You scare me rather. My reflection in the glass never did that; of course, I knew it so well. Like something I had tamed. . . . I'm going to smile, and my smile will sink down into your pupils, and heaven knows what it will become.

INEZ: And why shouldn't you "tame" *me*? (*The women gaze at each other, Estelle with a sort of fearful fascination.*) Listen! I want you to call me Inez. We must be great friends.

ESTELLE: I don't make friends with women very easily.

INEZ: Not with postal clerks, you mean? Hullo, what's that—that nasty red spot at the bottom of your cheek? A pimple?

ESTELLE: A pimple? Oh, how simply foul! Where?

INEZ: There. . . . You know the way they catch larks—with a mirror? I'm your lark mirror, my dear, and you can't escape me. . . . There isn't any pimple, not a trace of one. So what about it? Suppose the mirror started telling lies? Or suppose I covered my eyes—as he is doing—and refused to look at you, all that loveliness of yours would be wasted on the desert air. No, don't be afraid, I can't help looking at you, I shan't turn my eyes away. And I'll be nice to-you, ever so nice. Only you must be nice to me, too.

*A short silence.*

ESTELLE: Are you really—attracted by me?

INEZ: Very much indeed.

*Another short silence.*

ESTELLE, *indicating Garcin by a slight movement of her head:* But I wish he'd notice me, too.

INEZ: Of course! Because he's a Man! *To Garcin:* You've won. *Garcin says nothing.* But look at her, damn it! *Still no reply from Garcin.* Don't pretend. You haven't missed a word of what we've said.